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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/30/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ES](#)  
SUBJECT: FUNES DISAVOWS VP'S ANTI-US COMMENTS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: FM Martinez relayed September 30 a message from President Funes that anti-U.S. comments made by VP Sanchez Ceren September 26 did not reflect the views of either Funes or the GOES. Martinez welcomed Charge's public reaction that Sanchez Ceren's comments were "inconsistent" with the position taken by both Sanchez Ceren and the (left-wing) FMLN during the campaign and said he personally found them difficult to explain. Charge expressed USG concern that the VP's statements did not signal an operational FMLN foreign policy different from official GOES policy. He added that the U.S. was operating on the assumption that the relationship with the FMLN had "turned the page," looking forward not back. Martinez said he and Funes were in complete agreement, would not permit a parallel FMLN foreign policy, and hoped a Funes bilat with POTUS could occur soon. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Salvadoran FM Hugo Martinez told Charge and PolCouns September 30 that President Mauricio Funes had asked him to convey urgently a message in response to comments made September 26 by Vice President and Minister of Education Salvador Sanchez Ceren. Sanchez Ceren said "... to the people of the United States that they should learn this lesson: you were defeated in Vietnam, you were defeated in El Salvador, and you will be defeated in Latin America!" during an FMLN rally in support of Honduran President Zelaya. Martinez said Funes was confident the U.S. understood Sanchez Ceren's comments reflected his personal opinion and were not the position of the GOES. Martinez said he agreed with the Charge's reaction to these comments in the press, that they were "inconsistent" with either Sanchez Ceren's or the FMLN's position during the campaign. Martinez, one of the FMLN's more moderate members, said he was unsure if Sanchez Ceren's comments were purely personal or reflected the view of the FMLN's more orthodox leadership.

¶3. (C) Charge welcomed Martinez' comments but noted it was indeed a problem that Sanchez Ceren's comments were made publicly. No one, he said, is surprised that anti-U.S. sentiment still exists inside the FMLN given U.S. support of the GOES during the Civil War. However, he continued, the U.S. believed we had turned a new page with the FMLN, noting that Funes himself expressed optimism regarding the FMLN's evolution during his meeting with the Secretary June 1. Martinez said he found Sanchez Ceren's comments "a little hard to explain" and said Funes had said that for him and the GOES, the past is behind us and the relationship has entered a new phase. Martinez reiterated Funes' desire for a bilateral visit with POTUS soon and in the best environment possible. Martinez said he would telephone A/S Shannon to reiterate this message.

¶4. (C) Martinez said he had spoken with the VP earlier September 30, who had acknowledged that Martinez' public response was correct to point out that Sanchez Ceren was not speaking on behalf of the GOES on September 26. Martinez said he agreed with Charge, that Sanchez Ceren's comments had

been personal in nature and inconsistent with both the GOES and FMLN position on U.S. relations. On the other hand, Martinez acknowledged the legitimacy of Charge's concern about FMLN free-lancing, for example, meeting with Zelaya nearly surreptitiously at Comalapa airport on the night before Zelaya's return to Honduras.

15. (C) Comment: While Sanchez Ceren's comments have received attention in the Salvadoran press, they have not been interpreted as a shift in the Funes Administration's approach towards the U.S. Embassy contacts are surprised that Sanchez Ceren made these intemperate comments publicly, not that he holds this opinion. We are pleased President Funes reached out urgently to make clear his VP's comments did not reflect his thinking or the position of the GOES. A likely consequence of this incident is that the cleavage between party and president continues to grow ever more pronounced.  
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